

# Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

A long time ago, there lived a young Greek girl called Arachne. She was the daughter of a shepherd. From a young age, Arachne taught herself how to weave beautiful tapestries. She wove pictures of animals, flowers and landscapes. By the time she was an adult, her work was so famous that people would travel for thousands of miles to see it.



When people saw Arachne's work, they would tell her how talented she was. They were so impressed that they started to say that Arachne was like a god. Every day, people would tell Arachne over and over again how brilliant she was. The more praise she was given, the more Arachne believed that she was the best.



Meanwhile, at the home of the gods, the goddess Athena had heard about Arachne. She was angered by the idea that someone would say that they were more talented than a god so Athena hatched a plan to confront Arachne.

A few days later, disguised as an old woman, Athena knocked on Arachne's door. "I have come to warn you," Athena rasped. "You should never have compared yourself to the gods. If you apologise now, Athena will forgive you."

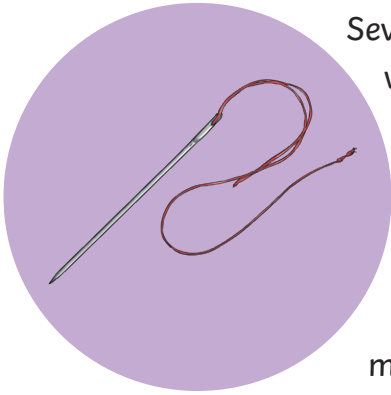
Arachne, who was surprised at what had just happened, looked at the old woman. "Pah!" she laughed. "Apologise? Why should I? You've seen my tapestries; I'm better than any human or any god. If Athena wants an apology, she can come down here and challenge me for it."

By now, Athena was so angry that she threw off her disguise and revealed her true self. "I accept your challenge," she whispered to Arachne in a cold voice.



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Arachne got to her feet right away and began to gather the finest threads she had. Both women started weaving and, for hours, the only noise that could be heard was the gentle sound of working hands.



Several hours later, Athena declared that the competition was over and demanded that Arachne bring over her work. Arachne held up her tapestry to the lamplight. Her scene was beautiful. It showed gods being mean to humans and not being punished. Even in the low light, it was clear to see that this was a masterpiece. Athena's work, which showed the gods punishing humans who misspoke about them, was nowhere near as fine.

Athena was furious that she had lost and immediately ripped Arachne's work into pieces. Arachne screamed at her to stop but it was too late. The tapestry was ruined. Arachne fell to the floor and sobbed; she knew that nobody would buy her work now.

However, Athena did not feel like Arachne had been punished enough. She took a small bag of herbs from her pocket and sprinkled them over Arachne. Suddenly, instead of two legs, Arachne now had eight thin legs coming out of her sides. She was covered in tiny, black hairs and a single thread of silk hung from her.

"Well, you can now weave all day long!" cried Athena, looking at the hideous creature in front of her. "You, a spider, better than the gods? I don't think so."



# Questions

1. What type of animal does Arachne get turned into? Tick one.

- sheep
- spider
- scorpion
- silkworm

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened.  
The first one has been done for you.

	Athena disguises herself as an old woman.
	Athena sprinkles herbs over Arachne.
	Arachne wins the competition.
1	Crowds of people told Arachne how talented she was.

3. When Athena accepted the challenge, what was the **first** thing Arachne did? Tick one.

- She gathered wool.
- She told the crowds that she was going to win.
- She gathered the finest threads she had.
- She begged Athena to reconsider.

4. Match Arachne's actions to Athena's response. One has been done for you.

Arachne believes she is the best.	Athena accepts the challenge.
Arachne says Athena should challenge her.	Athena begins weaving.
Arachne starts weaving a masterpiece.	Athena gets angry and hatches a plan.
Arachne wins the competition.	Athena tears Arachne's work into pieces.

5. What does Athena disguise herself as when she meets Arachne for the first time?

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6. Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy one word which tells you that Arachne looks disgusting.

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7. Do you think that Arachne's punishment was fair? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

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2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened.  
The first one has been done for you.

<b>2</b>	Athena disguises herself as an old woman.
<b>4</b>	Athena sprinkles herbs over Arachne.
<b>3</b>	Arachne wins the competition.
<b>1</b>	Crowds of people told Arachne how talented she was.

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Arachne wins the competition.	Athena tears Arachne's work into pieces.

5. What does Athena disguise herself as when she meets Arachne for the first time?

**Athena disguises herself as an old woman when she meets Arachne for the first time.**

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6. Look at the last paragraph. Find and copy one word which tells you that Arachne looks disgusting.

**hideous**

7. Do you think that Arachne's punishment was fair? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I don't think that Arachne's punishment was fair because Arachne had won the competition and then Athena punished her.**

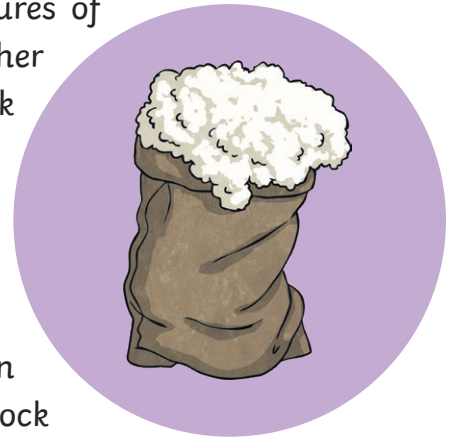


# Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

A long time ago, in ancient Greece, there lived a young girl called Arachne. She was the daughter of a shepherd and, from a young age, she taught herself how to weave using wool. For years, Arachne wove pictures of animals and landscapes, taking inspiration from her home. By the time she was an adult, Arachne's work was so famous that people would travel for thousands of miles to see it.

As Arachne became more and more talented, people began to tell her how amazing she was. Not only were people impressed by her work but they had also begun to compare her to the gods. Every day, people would flock to Arachne and tell her that she was more brilliant than any

god. The more praise she was given, the more Arachne believed that she was the best.



Meanwhile, on Mount Olympus, the goddess Athena had heard about a girl who was claiming to be a god. Angered by the idea that someone would say they were more talented than a god, Athena hatched a plan to confront Arachne.

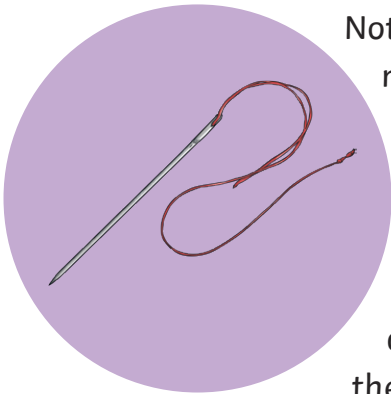
A few days later, dressed in rags and wearing a convincing mask, Athena knocked on Arachne's door. "I have come to warn you, my child," Athena rasped. "You should never have compared yourself to the gods." She looked pleadingly at Arachne. "Say your apologies now and Athena will forgive you."

Initially, Arachne was shocked by the sudden appearance of such a strange figure but soon a small smile appeared on her face. "Pah!" she laughed. "Beg for forgiveness? Why should I? You've seen my tapestries; I'm better than any human or any god. If Athena wants an apology, she can come down here and challenge me for it."



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Anger swept through Athena as she pulled off the mask and revealed herself. Now, at full height, her magnificent and ominous form threw a shadow over Arachne. "I accept your challenge," she whispered in a cold voice.



Not put off by the sudden appearance of a god in her room, Arachne got to her feet right away and began to gather the finest threads she had. Both women started immediately and, for hours, the only noise that could be heard was the gentle sound of working hands.

Several hours into the night, Athena declared that the duel was over and demanded that Arachne bring her the finished piece. With tired, blistered fingers, Arachne held her tapestry up to the lamplight. Her scene was beautiful. It showed gods being mean to humans and not being punished. Even in the low light, it was clear to see that this was a masterpiece. Athena's work, which showed the gods punishing humans who misspoke about them, was nowhere near as fine.

Athena was furious that she had lost and immediately tore Arachne's work into hundreds of tiny pieces. Arachne screamed at her to stop but it was too late; the tapestry was ruined. She fell to the floor and sobbed, wondering how she could have been so foolish as to enter into a competition she would never have been allowed to win. Nobody would ever buy work from her again.

However, Athena was still furious with Arachne and withdrew a small bag of poisonous herbs from her pocket. She sprinkled them over the weeping Arachne, who stopped crying at once. Suddenly, her legs began to shake and change until eight thin, sharp legs were growing from her instead. Her body was now covered in a thin layer of black hair and a small thread hung from her abdomen.

"Well, you can now weave all day long!" cried Athena; power danced in her eyes as she looked at the hideous beast before her. "You, a spider, better than the gods? I don't think so."





# Questions

1. What did Arachne's **final** tapestry show? Tick one.

- A creature with eight thin legs.
- The gods going unpunished for being mean to humans.
- Humans being punished by the gods for misspeaking.
- Animals, flowers and landscapes.

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show they order that they happened.

	Arachne realised that she had been a fool.
	The old lady revealed herself to be Athena.
	Arachne produces a masterpiece.
	Arachne grew more and more talented.

3. Tick one word to complete the sentence.

When Athena tore up her work, Arachne was \_\_\_\_\_.

- angry
- distraught
- confused
- weaving

4. Draw four lines to match each character with their action.

the shepherd
Arachne
Athena
crowds of people

became angered by Arachne's claims
told Arachne she was brilliant
had a daughter named Arachne
taught herself how to weave

5. Look at the paragraph beginning: **Meanwhile, on Mount Olympus...**

Find and copy the group of words that mean 'thought of an idea'.

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6. What does Athena do to punish Arachne for beating her?

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7. **With tired, blistered fingers...**

Explain why the author has used this phrase.

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8. Some people believe that Athena's reaction was extreme. Imagine that you are Athena. How would you have reacted to Arachne winning the competition?

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# Answers

1. What did Arachne's **final** tapestry show? Tick one.

- A creature with eight thin legs.
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- Humans being punished by the gods for misspeaking.
- Animals, flowers and landscapes.

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show they order that they happened.

<b>4</b>	Arachne realised that she had been a fool.
<b>2</b>	The old lady revealed herself to be Athena.
<b>3</b>	Arachne produces a masterpiece.
<b>1</b>	Arachne grew more and more talented.

3. Tick one word to complete the sentence.

When Athena tore up her work, Arachne was \_\_\_\_\_.

- angry
- distraught**
- confused
- weaving

4. Draw four lines to match each character with their action.

the shepherd	became angered by Arachne's claims
Arachne	told Arachne she was brilliant
Athena	had a daughter named Arachne
crowds of people	taught herself how to weave

5. Look at the paragraph beginning: **Meanwhile, on Mount Olympus...**

Find and copy the group of words that mean 'thought of an idea'.

**hatched a plan**

## Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

6. What does Athena do to punish Arachne for beating her?

**Accept one of the following: Athena turns her into a spider/Athena sprinkles poisonous herbs on her/Athena rips up her tapestry.**

7. **With tired, blistered fingers...**

Explain why the author has used this phrase.

**Accept responses which make reference to Arachne working hard/working for a long time, such as: The author has used the phrase 'with tired, blistered fingers' to show how hard Arachne has worked to create a masterpiece which is better than Athena's.**

8. Some people believe that Athena's reaction was extreme. Imagine that you are Athena.

How would you have reacted to Arachne winning the competition?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would have reacted to Arachne winning the competition by congratulating her and telling her that I was wrong and that she is clearly more talented than a god.**

# Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

A long time ago, in ancient Greece, there lived a young girl called Arachne. She was the daughter of a shepherd and, from a young age, she taught herself how to weave using the wool her father brought home with him. For years, Arachne wove pictures of animals, people, landscapes and anything else which inspired her. By the time she was an adult, Arachne's work was so well known that people would travel for thousands of miles to see her incredible pictures.

As Arachne's talent flourished, so did the praise that she received. Not only were people impressed by her work but they had now begun to compare her to the gods. Every day, people would flock to Arachne and declare that she possessed a godlike talent. The more praise was lavished upon her, the more Arachne started to believe that she was more talented than any god.



Meanwhile, high on Mount Olympus (the home of many Greek gods) Athena, the goddess of war, had heard about a girl who was claiming to be a god. Enraged by the idea that someone had dismissed the very gods who gave them their gifts, Athena hatched a plan to confront Arachne while disguised as an old woman.

A few days later, dressed in rags and wearing an incredibly convincing mask, Athena knocked on the door of Arachne's weaving room. "I have come to warn you, my child," Athena rasped. "You should never have compared yourself to the gods." Athena wiped a shaking hand across her brow to mimic fear. "Say your apologies now and Athena will forgive you."

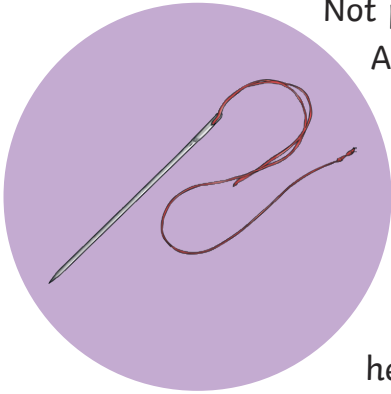
Arachne was initially shocked by the presence of such a strange and persistent figure but a small smile soon appeared on her face. "Pah!" she laughed. "Beg for forgiveness? Why should I? You've seen my tapestries. I'm better than any being in this world; mortal or otherwise. If Athena wants an apology, she can come down here and challenge me for it."





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Anger surged through Athena; she pulled off the mask and discarded the old rags that surrounded her. Now at full height, her magnificent and ominous form loomed over Arachne. "I accept your challenge," she whispered in a slow, cold voice.



Not put off by the sudden appearance of a god in her room, Arachne got to her feet right away and began to gather the finest threads she had. Both women got to work immediately and, for hours, the only noise that could be heard was the soft sound of working hands.

Several hours into the night, Athena declared that the duel was over and that Arachne should bring forward her piece for comparison. With blistered fingers, Arachne held her tapestry up to the lamplight. She had beautifully crafted a scene in which gods were mistreating humans and going unpunished. Even in the dim light, it was clear to see that this was a masterpiece. Athena's, which depicted the gods winning a fight against humans who had forsaken them, paled in comparison.

Athena was furious to be beaten and tore Arachne's work into hundreds of tiny pieces. Arachne screamed at her to stop but it was no use; the tapestry was ruined. Knowing that she should have been victorious and feeling ridiculous for allowing herself to be tricked into a fight that she could never win, Arachne fell to the floor and sobbed. Nobody would ever buy her work again; she was such a fool.

However, Athena didn't think that this was punishment enough and withdrew a small bag of poisonous herbs from her pocket. She sprinkled them over the weeping Arachne, who stopped crying at once. Suddenly, Arachne's legs began to shake and split until eight thin, sharp legs had taken their place. Her body was covered in a thin layer of black hair and a small thread hung from her abdomen.

"Well, you can now weave all day long!" cried Athena; a venomous look of joy and power danced in her eyes as she looked at the hideous beast in front of her. "You, a spider, better than the gods? I don't think so."



# Questions

1. Draw four lines to match each event to how the characters are feeling at the time.

People travel for miles to see Arachne's work.
Athena hears that Arachne is claiming to be a god.
Arachne's work is torn into tiny pieces.
Arachne is praised by everyone.

distraught
impressed
proud
furious

2. What did Athena's tapestry depict? Tick one.

- Gods fighting humans and winning.
- Gods going unpunished for mistreating humans.
- The gods on top of Mount Olympus.
- Gods and humans living together peacefully.

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **Anger surged through...**

Find and copy one word which means 'threatening'.

4. Fill in the missing words.

After duelling for several \_\_\_\_\_, Arachne had blisters on her \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Why did Arachne feel foolish?

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6. Describe Athena's character. Explain your answer.

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## Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

7. What do you think will happen next to Arachne? Explain your answer.

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8. What lesson do you think that people might learn from reading this story? Explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. Draw four lines to match each event to how the characters are feeling at the time.

People travel for miles to see Arachne's work.		distraught
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Arachne's work is torn into tiny pieces.		proud
Arachne is praised by everyone.		furious

2. What did Athena's tapestry depict? Tick one.

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- Gods and humans living together peacefully.

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **Anger surged through...**

Find and copy one word which means 'threatening'.

**ominous**

4. Fill in the missing words.

After duelling for several **hours**, Arachne had blisters on her **fingers**.

5. Why did Arachne feel foolish?

**Arachne felt foolish because she had been tricked into a competition that she would never be allowed to win.**

6. Describe Athena's character. Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Athena is a really powerful character. Even though she lost the competition, she was still able to punish Arachne. She is also unkind because she turned Arachne into a spider.**

7. What do you think will happen next to Arachne? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Arachne will stay as a spider forever and she will be made to weave webs as a punishment for beating Athena. I think that she will be very sad.**

## Mythical Stories from Different Cultures: The Story of Arachne

8. What lesson do you think that people might learn from reading this story? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that people will learn not to boast about being the best at something because that is what Arachne did and she got turned into a spider.**